

6. 5 Last Days Commands-Part 6

A New Years Exhortation for 2026

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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For those who are new, we have started a series in honor of the new year, to remind us as Christians that, we are soldiers of Jesus Christ and we're fighting in a war—a war that's taking place in the last days (the time just prior to Jesus' return).

The question we've been dealing with is—are we doing what the Word commands for those living in the last days?

In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 Paul gives what I'm calling, "**Five Last Day's Commands**"—or "*Five Commands to Christians Living in the Last Days.*"

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all *that you do* be done with love.

This morning, we find ourselves looking at the second command in this series to—"Stand fast in the faith"—

II. Stand Fast in the Faith—Part 2

The term "**the faith**" of which Paul speaks here is not the faith of *trusting* but the faith of *truth*.

In other words, it's referring to **N.T. truth in general** but also the **gospel truth in particular**—because only the true gospel has the power to save a soul and change a life for the glory of God.

A. Stand for New Testament truth in general

The Greek word for '**stand**' means, "*To stand firm, to be constant, to persevere*". In other words when the devil comes against God's Word—we are to stand firm and fight.

B. Stand for the truth of the gospel in particular

As we have said, only the true gospel can bring new life in Christ—a false gospel, no matter how sincerely it is believed in, will not save anyone.

When we call ourselves '*Evangelical Christians*' we're saying we believe in the gospel as presented in the New Testament and are committed to sharing it with others.

That was the passion and mission of Jesus who said, "*I have come to seek and to save those who are lost*" (Luke 19:10)—and that is the mission He passed on to His Church (the *Great Commission*).

Because of this you would think that nothing in the Christian church would be more important than teaching and training young disciples of Christ to know what the gospel is and how to share it with those who are lost—yet sadly that is not the case.

At this point there are those who would say indignantly—“*I don’t need any teaching on knowing the gospel. I know the gospel! I’m saved! I’m not a ‘baby’ Christian!*”

Okay, fair enough—so how would you start a gospel presentation with someone who is interested?

“I’d start by telling them that God loves them.”

While that’s fine, it wouldn’t necessarily motivate a person to accept Jesus into their heart—their response could possibly be, “*Great, God loves me—I knew I was pretty special!*”

I mean, as nice as it is to tell someone that God loves them—that approach wouldn’t prove they *need* Jesus to be their Savior.

“Well, I’d tell them they need to receive Jesus into their heart because—He’ll give them peace, and joy and fulfillment in life!”

Okay, now you’re becoming a ‘salesman’ for Jesus.

This is the common problem with most modern gospel presentations—they’re based on how receiving Jesus will in some way ‘enrich’ the person’s life you’re presenting the gospel to.

Of course, as Christians we know that receiving Jesus Christ into a person’s heart *will* ‘enrich’ them by giving them eternal life—but that’s not the problem.

The problem with most modern gospel presentations involves promising people *material* and *emotional* blessings that will enrich their lives if they accept Jesus as their Savior.

“Okay, so how would you do it—how would you start off presenting the gospel to a person?”

I’d do it the way those in the Book of Acts did it—people like Peter and Paul.

Do you realize that nowhere in the Book of Acts does anyone, apostle or otherwise, ever use the love of God or material enrichment or even emotional blessings (happiness, fulfillment, or peace) as a basis for presenting the gospel?

Now that doesn’t mean we can’t ever talk about God’s love or tell them how God has worked in our lives since we received Jesus as our Savior (the peace, the purpose, the joy, etc.)

I just want you to understand that when the apostles presented the gospel to people—they primarily presented it as a way for them to escape coming judgment and become members of God’s coming Kingdom.

As we said last week, the gospel isn’t a message that is designed to make people feel happy or good about themselves.

It wasn't intended by God to build their self-esteem by reinforcing the idea that they're so special and worthy that God was willing to give His Son to die for them to prove their worth.

On the contrary, the gospel is a *warning* for people to flee the wrath that is coming (judgment) by taking refuge in Christ for safety!

And that is why I have included, in a proper gospel presentation, a warning that—

1. There is a day of judgment coming

As we have already said, this isn't really a part of the gospel itself—it is more the introduction, the *motivation* to get people moving in the direction of *salvation*.

Unfortunately, as we said last time, many Christians today have been taught to share the gospel, not as a warning urging people to receive Jesus as a Savior Who will save them from the fires of hell—but as some kind of '*self-improvement program*' that will make their lives better and more comfortable here on earth (i.e., '*help them stop drinking or taking drugs—give them a better marriage*' etc.).

It's not that those are unimportant issues to God—it's just that they're not the main issue.

I want to be careful here because I don't want you to 'pile-on' a hurting person by hitting them with coming judgment right off the bat in your gospel presentation—be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

If you sense that they have been so beat up by their circumstances that they're having a hard time functioning—you can start off by talking to them about how much God loves them, so much so that He sent His Son to die for them (not because they were worthy).

And yet at some point the subject of coming judgment needs to be brought up so that they understand that the gospel isn't just '*happy talk*'—but a warning that judgment is coming (eternal judgment in hell) and the only way they can escape that judgment is to believe in and receive Jesus as their Savior:

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world [them] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Reinforce the truth that without Jesus dying for us we were doomed to spend eternity in hell—and that Jesus entered the world on a '*search and rescue mission*' to save lost sinners from coming judgment. (We gave examples from Scripture last time of the reality of coming judgment as the motivation for receiving Jesus Christ as Savior)

So, Jesus came to this world to die for us so that we might have forgiveness for our sins and spend eternity with Him in heaven someday. But you need to communicate to them that the first step in God forgiving them of their sins is:

2. Repentance

There are many pastors that don't believe *repentance* is necessary for salvation—they say a person only needs to *believe* in Jesus to be saved.

I have heard pastors say that telling people they must *repent* before they can believe and be saved—is to teach salvation by works!

Whenever someone says that to me—I simply direct them to the words of Jesus Himself on the subject—“*I tell you...unless you repent you will all likewise perish [in hell].*” (Luke 13:3)

Let me say that I believe that faith in Jesus Christ *is* the only thing necessary for a person to be forgiven and receive eternal life—it’s just that I see *repentance* and *faith* as ‘flipsides of the same coin.’

In other words, if saving faith is turning to Jesus for salvation—it obviously implies turning away from your present course—the direction your life is currently heading in.

At this point I need to define biblically what *repentance* really is.

The Greek word for **repentance** is *metanoia* which literally means—“*to have a change of mind*”—a change of mind about the direction of your life—that it’s going in the wrong direction (away from God) and that you need to turn around and start heading in the opposite direction (toward God).

It’s important to note that the concept of **repentance** permeates the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments—let’s just look at some of the New Testament examples:

1. 'Repent' was the first word out of the mouth of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2)

Matthew 3:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

2. 'Repent' was the first word out of the mouth of Jesus (Matthew 4:17)

Matthew 4:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

3. 'Repent' was the first word out of the Apostle's mouths (Mark 6:7,12)

Mark 6:7, 12 (NKJV)

⁷ And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by* two, and gave them power over unclean spirits... ¹² So they went out and preached that *people* should repent.

4. Repentance was an integral part of the gospel that the Church was commissioned to preach to the world (Luke 24:46-47)

Luke 24:46-47 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

5. 'Repent' was the first word of Peter's invitation on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38)

Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

6. *Repentance was an essential part of Paul's gospel presentation (Acts 26:19-20)***Acts 26:19–20 (NKJV)**

¹⁹ “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

Repentance is a word we don't hear too much anymore today in the modern church—it sounds archaic and out of step with the culture.

And so, in an effort to be hip, cool, relevant and politically correct—many pastors have removed it from their gospel preaching altogether (the word sounds too negative)—but this is nothing new.

We can go back to 1937, when Dr. Harry A. Ironside, a great man of God and Bible teacher, noted that the biblical doctrine of *repentance* was being systematically deleted from the gospel message by some who saw it as a *work* and therefore contrary to the gospel of grace Paul preached.

Let me quote from his book, *Except Ye Repent*—Ironside wrote:

“The doctrine of repentance is the missing note in many otherwise orthodox and fundamentally sound circles today...Shallow preaching that does not grapple with the terrible fact of man's sinfulness and guilt, calling on all men everywhere to repent results in shallow conversions. And so we have myriads of glib-tongued professors today who give no evidence of regeneration whatsoever. Prating of salvation by grace, they manifest no grace in their lives. Loudly declaring they are justified by faith alone, they fail to remember that faith without works is dead...”

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Once again, many pastors have removed '*repentance*' from their preaching of the gospel because it sounds too negative and works oriented.

Many have chosen rather to present the gospel by using Revelation 3:20:

Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Those who try to use this verse as a gospel presentation (because it sounds much more positive)—neglect to mention (either thru ignorance or oversight) how that if you look at Revelation 3:20 closely

you'll see that—before the verse there is a *space*—and before the space there is a *period*—and before the period is the word '**repent**'—

Revelation 3:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ ...Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

MacArthur—

"This is not a new battle; this is an old battle being fought for the minds of a new generation. People today are preaching a gospel that says, *"Look, all you have to do is believe in Jesus, He's standing at the door of your heart knocking, just open the door. Don't worry about your sin, don't worry about giving anything up God will take care of that later..."*"

There can be no true gospel presentation without repentance—in fact it's so much a part of the gospel that the word '*repent*' and '*repentance*' are often used in the N.T. as synonyms for '*faith*', '*salvation*', and '*eternal life*'—

Luke 5:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance [i.e., '*saving faith and eternal life*']."

Acts 11:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life [salvation]."

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance [*saving faith and eternal life*].

But where is that kind of preaching today? For the most part, it has been replaced by a modern, politically correct gospel.

You see, it's not fashionable to preach a gospel that demands that people give up their sin and worldly pursuits to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow after Jesus with all their hearts and lives.

One pastor said it well—

"The gospel that we hear being preached today is—'*Come to Jesus and you'll be rich, come to Jesus and He'll take away all the pain of life and make you happy.*'"

The gospel being preached today is, for the most part, a cross-less gospel where there's no mention of repentance (the turning away from sin)—instead potential converts are being told:

'Just believe the facts about Jesus, pray the sinner's prayer and you're 'go to go.' The implication being—'*You don't have to worry about giving up anything (alcohol, drugs, sex outside of marriage...etc.)—just add Jesus to your life without subtracting anything!*' But that is not the gospel that Jesus and the Apostles preached because—that is not the true gospel!"

Don't misunderstand, I'm not saying that we are saved by our works—but if a person is truly saved, they will have good works ('fruit')—even as Jesus said, "...*by their fruits you will know them.*" (Matthew 7:20)

Jesus is telling us that where there is true saving faith there will be certain ‘fruits’ in your life that will bear witness to the genuineness of your repentance—

Matthew 3:1-2, 7-8 (NKJV)

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"... ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance..."

Charles Spurgeon said,

"We are certain that a man is saved by faith alone; but we are just as certain that the kind of faith that saves a man is never really alone."

So true biblical repentance always involves *fruit*—*or in other words a changed life!*

While it's true that sometimes change takes time—true repentance desires it with all the heart and keeps seeking God for grace and strength to change—it isn't just lip service. The main misconception that many harbor under concerning repentance is that—they equate it *only* with remorse and regret and not ultimately with change.

Remorse and regret are rooted in *feelings* whereas true repentance is rooted in *action* (turning around and making a change).

➤ *"I want to change, I'm battling with "xyz" sin, I'm asking God to give me victory—but I still don't have victory—does that mean I'm really not repenting?"*

The key word is '*battling!*' If you weren't saved, you wouldn't be battling the sin in your life!

It proves you have a new nature that is battling your old nature for control—you've repented for *salvation*, and now you're engaging in ongoing repentance for *sanctification* (change)...

Paul the Apostle addressed this very issue in 2 Corinthians 7 calling remorse and regret “*worldly sorrow*” because the person really isn't serious about changing the direction of their life in any substantive way—

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance [change]. For you were made sorry in a godly manner... ¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance [change] *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Paul is saying that feelings of remorse or regret over your sins make you *feel* bad for what you have done—but in and of themselves don't lead a person to make any changes or provide restitution.

That's the difference between '*godly sorrow*' and '*worldly sorrow*'—godly sorrow is God-focused and worldly sorrow is self-focused.

Look at the results that godly sorrow produced in the Corinthian's lives—

2 Corinthians 7:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, *what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!* In all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

One pastor put it this way—

“Simply feeling guilty over what I have done is not repentance. In essence I haven’t even touched upon the sin itself, and Satan has effectively counterfeited the path that leads to repentance because it is so important to our walk with God. And it is possible for a Christian to remain in an attitude of regret and remorse for years and get nowhere in victory over sin. Because God doesn’t work through regret and remorse—He works through repentance.”

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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